

**Minutes
Newton Planning Commission
March 24, 2009
Council Chambers
City Hall**

The regular meeting of the Newton Planning Commission was held at 7:00 p.m. on March 24, 2009 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Members

Present: Kent Elliott
Stan Gabriel
Donny Setzer
Ken Simmons
Mark Stalnaker
Jimmy Newsome, Jr.

Members

Absent: Jim Smith

Staff Present: Glenn J. Pattishall, AICP, Planning Director/Asst. City Manager
Alex Fulbright, AICP, Assistant Planning Director

Others: None

Item 2: Consideration of Minutes February 24, 2009 Meeting

Vice Chairman Simmons asked for consideration of the minutes of the February 24, 2009 meeting. There being no corrections or additions, he ruled that the minutes were approved as presented.

Item 3: Old Business: Report on March 12, 2009 Core Area Plan Workshop

Vice Chairman Simmons recognized **Alex Fulbright** who went over his March 19, 2009 memo to the Planning Commission on the drop-in workshop that was held on March 12, 2009. He said there were approximately 250 people attending and with good participation and comments. He explained the comments and issues related to transportation, utilities, housing, land use, economic and commercial development, community character and environment. He reviewed a map that displayed the various areas that had significant positioning as they relate to issues and concerns identified during the workshop.

One of the issues that was discussed was establishment of historic districts. **Mr. Pattishall** explained the current historic district was established as a National Register District known as the North Main Avenue Historic District, but it was not a locally designated district and had no regulations. He indicated that there were various comments both pro and con during the drop-in workshop about establishment of local historic districts, for the North Main District as well as in the Downtown and in the former Catawba College area.

Mr. Fulbright explained tax credits associated with historic preservation and that the Planning Commission would be called upon at some point to comment on what policy recommendations they would want in the Plan concerning this for the Core Area.

Mr. Elliott said that with regard to aesthetics in reviewing the comment sheet that was provided in this memo, it would appear that this was a consistent theme for many people who commented. He said that aesthetics have a very positive effect in terms of feel, safety and investment and is a psychological motivator for people. He said there should be recommendations in the Plan to address the appearance of structures with regulations that have some teeth.

Mr. Simmons said he felt that education of appearance standards and their purposes would be important as well and should be included as a recommendation in the Plan.

Mr. Elliott said that it was clear the people value aesthetics and it is missing in the Core Area.

Mr. Simmons and **Mr. Newsome** discussed a loss of community as it has declined. He said that most, (citing the loss of small neighborhood grocery stores, the theater in North Newton, the closing of retail stores), all have disappeared over time, but have been replaced by other uses that are different and serve different purposes. They each expressed concern that Newton needs beautification efforts, as well.

Mr. Fulbright mentioned that one of the purposes of the area plan should be to match it with the needs and discussed possibly adjusting zoning to reflect existing uses and development patterns.

Mr. Pattishall discussed statistics on the age of the water and sewer infrastructure as well as statistics on line failures over the last few years as something the Plan will address as they relate to impacts on development decisions.

Mr. Simmons said that the City should go after grants to do whatever is possible to repair and replace infrastructure.

Mr. Elliott said that there should be a focus on aesthetics in the Downtown as well because this is the face of Newton.

Mr. Simmons said that he noted sidewalks were mentioned as also being needed throughout and he said that it was an alternative transportation mode, and that in addition to adding sidewalks throughout the area, that the maintenance of existing sidewalks should be emphasized as well.

Donny Setzer said that he felt that from the comments made, that the key was appearance of the area. He agreed that the Downtown should be the first emphasis and then the neighborhoods and suggested more and better code enforcement. He said many areas need to be cleaned up to make the City attractive to people who would like to come to Newton or may consider it for relocation.

Mr. Elliott said it looked like Newton's pride had disappeared. He agreed that the City needed to do things to change that.

Mr. Setzer suggested that the City have a five-year plan for its water and sewer systems within the area address needs and problems.

Mr. Stalnaker said he would like to see and hear examples of other cities plans that have succeeded and failed.

Mr. Fulbright said that some cities adopt plans but never implement them; but that would not be the case with the Core Area Plan or has been the case with the other three plans that have been adopted recently by Council and recommended by the Planning Commission.

Item 4: New Business

There was none.

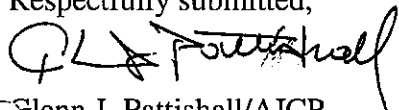
Item 5: Reports

Mr. Pattishall briefly reviewed the monthly reports for February, 2009 and year-to- date.

Item 6: Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Glenn J. Pattishall/AICP
Secretary

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